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*ELCKERLIJC-EVERYMAN: THE QUESTION OF
PRIORITY¹*

I will present first some arguments from the versification of the plays, Dutch and English, which Professor Logeman has noted, without, however, emphasizing them as strongly as they seem to deserve.

1. Throughout the plays, with very rare exceptions, when the Dutch has a line of verse divided between two speakers, the English has regularly a full rhymed line in place of each portion. This points strongly to the priority of the Dutch, especially when one considers that in general the correspondence of English and Dutch is a line-for-line correspondence and that in the Dutch these fractional lines begin at the left margin of the page, exactly as the full lines do. Apparently the English translator has treated every line of his original as a full line, without regard to length or lack of rhyme. This conclusion, probable as it is, is made practically certain by the curious relationship of *Ev.* 114-18, *El.* 99-101.

<i>Ev.</i>	I know the not what messenger arte thou
<i>Deth.</i>	I am dethe that no man dredeth
	For eueryman I rest and none spareth
	For it is goddes commandment
	That all to me sholde be obedyent. (<i>Ev.</i> 114-18).

¹ About a year ago I presented to the Philological Club of the University of Chicago some evidence which seemed to me to settle this much-discussed question. Professor Wood became interested in the subject and a few days later sent me a letter supporting my view with entirely new arguments. As the evidence used by both of us had been overlooked or inadequately presented by our predecessors, we decided to publish a joint article. Our announcement to this effect brought a letter from Professor Logeman asking if we had seen his latest discussion of the subject; and I had to reply that, as the reviews of it had indicated that it contained nothing new, I had failed to order it upon its appearance and had later forgotten it. Professor Logeman had the kindness to send me a copy of his discussion; and I found that it contained much that was new and important—enough, indeed, in my opinion to settle the question of priority definitely and finally; see especially the following pages of his discussion ("Elckerlyk-Everyman. De vraag naar de Prioriteit opnieuw onderzocht," *Gand*, 1902): 10, 11, 13, 16, 40, 41, 59, 76, 119, 120, 122, 123. Unfortunately, as it seems to me, Professor Logeman, in his attempt at an entirely objective treatment, has buried his decisive arguments under a mass of interesting, but indecisive and sometimes erroneous, discussions; and this is the reason why his pamphlet was not recognized as containing the final words on the subject. Under the circumstances, therefore, it seemed advisable to Professor Wood and myself to publish our contributions to the discussion.

- El.* Wie bist du bode
Die doot. Ick ben die doot die niemant en spaert.
 Maer elckerlyck sal bi
 Gods beueele doen rekeninghe mi. (*El.* 99-101).

The lines are wrongly divided in the Dutch and the effect of the wrong division is perceptible in the English. The lines should read:

- El.* Wie bist du, bode?
Die doot. Ick ben die doot,
 Die niemant en spaert, maer elckerlyck sal bi
 Gods beveele doen rekeninghe mi.

The curious condition metrically of *Ev.* 87-100 becomes easily explicable when viewed in this light, and affords support to the theory here advanced. Other striking passages might be cited, but these may suffice.¹

2. Professor Logeman calls attention (pp. 156-57) to the fact that in two places the Dutch has very complicated stanza-forms, in 549-77 three elaborately rhymed stanzas with a refrain, in 837-53 two triolets.² The English passages corresponding to these do not present any notable variations from the prevailing rather irregular mode of rhyming. It seems hardly possible that a translator would, or indeed could, have erected on the basis of the English such elaborate structures as these stanzas and triolets, whereas nothing would be simpler or more likely than that a translator, with the Dutch before him, should overlook or disregard the elaborate structural features of his original. Compare the passages:

¹ See Logeman's Index, under "Typografiese dispositie als bron van verkeerde vertaling."

² Logeman is wrong, I think, in excluding from these triolets ll. 840, 842, 843, and ll. 848, 850, 851. They form integral parts of the triolets. And the precisely similar distribution of the speeches of Elckerlijc and Duecht in the two triolets is an argument of no little weight that we have in the Dutch passage an original composition rather than a translator's modification.

The three stanzas (*El.* 549-77) were apparently intended to be exactly alike in structure; the second and the third are, with the slight but certain emendations of *scat* to *saet* in 558 and *wilt* *ontfaen* to *wel* *ontfaet* in 564; the first lacks a line after 555, and ll. 549-51 do not conform to the rhyme-scheme of the other two stanzas. As there is considerable evidence that corruptions are present in the Dutch text in several places, it is possible that this stanza is badly corrupted; but it is equally possible that it was not written correctly in the first place.

- O levende leven! o hemels broot!
550 O wech der waerheyt! o godlic wesen,
Die nederquam, wt sijns vaders schoot
In een suver maecht gheresen,
Omdat ghi elckerlijc wout ghenesen,
Die Adam onterfde bi Yeven rade!
555 O heylighe triniteyt wtghelesen,
Wilt mi vergheven mijn mesdade,
Want ic begheer aen u ghenade!
- O godlijc tresoer, o coninlijc saet!
O alder werelt toeverlaet!
560 Specie der engelen sonder versaden!
Spiegel der vruecht daert al aen staet,
Wiens licht hemel ende aerde beslaet,
Hoort mijn roepen, al yst te spade!
Mijn bede wel inden troen ontfaet!
565 Al bin ic sondich, mesdadich, ende quaet,
Scrijft mi int boeck, des hemels blade,
Want ic begheer aen u ghenade!
- O Maria, moeder des hemels almachtich,
Staet mi ter noot bi voordachtich!
570 Dat mi die viant niet en verlade,
Want nakende is mi die doot crachtich!
Bidt voer mi dijnen sone voerdachtich,
Sodat ic mach gaen inden rechten pade,
Daer die wegen niet en sijn onrachtich.
575 Maeet mi uwes kints rije delachtich,
Sodat ic in sijn passie bade,
Want ic begheer aen u ghenade!
- O eternall God! O hevenly fygure!
O way of ryghtwysnes! O goodly vysyon,
Whiche descended downe in a vyrgyn pure,
Bycause he wolde every man redeme,
585 Whiche Adam forfayted by his dysobedyence!
O blessyd god-heed electe and hye deuyne,
Forgyve my grevous offence;
Here I crye the mercy in this presence!
- O ghostly treasure! O raunsomer and redemer!
590 Of all the worlde hope and conduyter!
Myrrour of Ioye, foundatour of mercy,
Whiche enlumyneth heven and erth therby,

Here my clamorous complaynt, though it late be!
 Receyve my prayers unworthy in this hevy lyfe;¹
 595 Though I be a synner moost abhomynable,
 Yet let my name be wryten in Moyses table!

O Mary, praye to the Maker of all thyng
 Me for to helpe at my endynge,
 And save me fro the power of my enemy,
 600 For deth assayleth me strongly;
 And, Lady, that I may by meane of thy prayer
 Of your sones glory to be partynere,
 By the meanes of his passyon I it crave.
 I beseche you helpe my soule to save!

Elckerlije

Mi dunct, wacharmen! wij moeten voert
 835 Rekeninghe doen ende ghelden mijn scult,
 Want mijn tijt is schier vervult.
 Neemter exempel aen, alle diet hoort ende siet,

Ende meret, hoet nu al van mi vliet;
 Sonder mijn duecht [die] wil met mi varen!

Duecht

840 Alle aertsche dinghen zijn al niet.

Elckerlije

Doch meret, hoet nu al van mi vliet!

Duecht

Schoonheyte, cracht, vroescap dat hem liet,
 Tgheselschap, die vrienden ende magen waren.

Elckerlije

Nu meret, hoet nu al van mi vliet;
 845 Sonder mijn duecht die wil mit mi varen!

Ghenade, coninc der enghelenscharen!
 Ghenade, moeder gods, staet mi bi!

Duecht

Ic sal mi puer voer gode verclaren.

Elckerlije

Ghenade, coninc der enghelenscharen!

¹ Perhaps we should read in 593, 594: *though it be late and in this hevy state.*

Duecht

850 Cort ons die pine, sonder verswaren
Maect ons deynde los ende vri!

Elekerlije

Ghenade, concineck der enghelenscharen!
Ghenade, moeder gods, staet mi bi!

In uwen handen, vader, hoe dat si,
Beveel ic u minen gheest in vreden;
Ick vare metter duecht.

Every Man

Me thynke, alas! that I must be gone,
865 To make my rekenynge and my dettes paye;
For I se my tyme is nye spent awaye.
Take example, all ye that this do here or se,
Here they that I love best do forsake me
Excepte my good dedes that bydeth truely.

Good Dedes

870 All erthly thynges is but vanyte;
Beaute strength and dyscercyon do man forsake,
Folysshe frendes and kynnesmen that fayre spake;
All fleeth save good dedes and that am I.

Every Man

Have mercy on me, God moost myghty!
875 And stande by me, thou moder & mayde, holy Mary!

Good Dedes

Fere not, I wyll speke for the.

Every Man

Here I crye God mercy.

Good Dedes

Shorte oure ende and mynysshe our payne
Let us go and never come agayne.

Every Man

- 880 In to thy handes lorde my soule I commende
 Receyve it lorde that it be not lost
 As thou me boughtest so me defende
 And save me from the fendes boost
 That I may appere with that blessyd hoost
 885 That shall be saved at the day of dome
 (In manus tuas) of myghtes moost
 For ever (Commendo spiritum meum).

Careful comparison of the Dutch and the English in each case will, I think, lead inevitably to the conclusion that the Dutch is the original and the English the translation. It will be noted that the stanzaic structure of the first Dutch passage has left traces of itself in the English, but it is not certain that the Englishman recognized fully the elaborate form from which he was translating. It is easy to explain the relations of the two passages if the Dutch be the original. It is hardly possible to do so, I think, upon the contrary supposition. The case in connection with the passage containing the triolets is, if anything, even stronger. It seems very clear in this case that the Englishman did not understand the metrical structure of the Dutch and attempted to avoid what he must have regarded as its unskilful repetitions by omitting some lines, transposing others, and giving a variant translation to others upon their reappearance. Further discussion of these passages seems unnecessary and we may pass to some evidence of a different nature.

3. In *Ev.* 519 ff. Good dedes tells Everyman that she has a sister called *Knowlege*, which shall go with and help him. In l. 527 the pronoun used to refer to *Knowlege* is *he* (and none of the English editions have any variant). In the Dutch *Kennisse* is called *suster* in 485 and is consistently referred to as feminine. If this error stood alone in the English, it would perhaps not be very convincing, but a similar error occurs a little farther on. In *Ev.* 539 editions B and L have *holy man Confession* (and there is good reason for believing these editions to be the most authoritative). In 541 the pronoun referring to *Confession* is *him*, in 544 it is *he*, notwithstanding which *Shryfte* (or *Confession*) is addressed as the *Mother of Salwaycyon*. In this instance again the Dutch is consistent throughout. It may,

of course, he argued that the Dutchman has in translating corrected an error which he found in his original. If so, he has by a fortunate coincidence found names for these characters which have the grammatical gender called for by the original conception. It seems much more likely that the Englishman, with his vision limited to the lines immediately before him, has translated thoughtlessly and without a clear recollection of the fundamental conceptions.

A more remarkable passage of a slightly different nature occurs in *Ev.* 728-72 (*El.* 697-742). The situation is this. Everyman goes out (i.e., behind the stage) to receive the sacraments of communion and extreme unction. It is clear from the Dutch (ll. 697-700) that he goes out after l. 700 and that the long conversation between Vijf sinnen and Kennisse is intended not merely to edify the audience but to occupy their attention during the absence of Elckerlijc. The English translator has not clearly understood the situation, and instead of dismissing Everyman after l. 731 (which is a bad translation of the corresponding Dutch line) allows him to remain during a considerable part of the discussion. He is, indeed, addressed directly in l. 747, and the reader of the English who had not the Dutch text before him might well suppose that Everyman was present throughout the whole of this discourse but for the fact that his re-entry is noticed in l. 769. This instance of the failure of the English translator to understand clearly the general situation of his original seems to me unmistakable and sufficient of itself alone to settle the question as to the priority of the two versions. I do not believe that anyone can read the passages in question carefully without coming to this conclusion. The following extracts will suffice to set forth the situation.

Every Man

Fayne wolde I receyue that holy body,
And mekely to my ghostly fader I wyll go.

V. Wyttes

Every-man, that is the best that ye can do.
731 God wyll you to salvacyon brynge,
For preesthode exceedeth all other thyng.
To us holy scrypture they do teche,
And converteth man fro synne heven to reche.

- 735 God hath to them more power gyven
 Than to ony aungell that is in heven.
 With .v. wordes he may consecrate
 Goddes body in flesshe and blode to make,
 And handeleth his maker bytwene his hande[s].
- 740 The preest byndeth and unbyndeth all bandes
 Both in erthe and in heven.
 Thou mynystres all the sacramentes seven;
 Though we kysse thy fete thou were worthy.
 Thou arte surgyon that cureth synne deedly,
- 745 No remedy we fynde under god
 Bute all onely preesthode.
 Every-man, god gave preest[es] that dygnyte
 And setteth them in his stede amonge us to be.
 Thus be they above aungelles in degree.
- Knowlege
- If preestes be good it is so suerly.
 But whan Iesu hanged on the crosse with grete smarte,
 There he gave out of his blessyd herte
 The [seven] sacrament[es] in grete tourment;
 He solde them not to us, that lorde omnypotent,
- 755 Therefore saynt peter⁴ the apostell dothe saye
 That Iesus curse hath all they
 Whiche god theyr savyour do by or sell,
 Or they for ony money do take or tell.
 Synfull preestes gyveth the synners example bad;
- 760 Theyr chyldren sytteth by other mennes fyres I have harde.
 And some haunteth womens company
 With unclene lyfe as lustes of lechery
 These be with synne made blynde.

V. Wyttes

- I trust to god no suche may we fynde.
- 765 Therefore let us preesthode honour,
 And folowe theyr doctryne for our soules socoure.
 We be theyr shepe and they shepeherdes be,
 By whome we all be kepte in swerte.
 Peas, for yonder I se every man come
- 770 Whiche hat made true satysfaccyon.

The Dutch corresponding to *Ev.* 728-735 is:

Elckerlijc

Ic wil gods lichaem minlic aenvaerden,
 Ende oetmoedlijc totten priester gaen.

Vijf sinnen

Elckerlijck, dat is wel ghedaen;
 700 God laet u met salicheden volbringen:
 Die priester gaet boven alle dinghen:
 Si zijn, die ons die scriftuere leeren
 Ende den mensche van sonden keeren.

It will be observed that the Englishman by mistranslating l. 700 and introducing *For* into the next line has obscured the exit of Everyman, or rather, has made it necessary for him to remain and hear the discussion between Fyve Wyttes and Knowlege. Corresponding to *Ev.* 747-49 the Dutch is:

Dit heeft die heere den priester ghegheven,
 Ende zijn in zijn stede hier ghebleven;
 720 Dus zijn si boven die enghelen gheset.

Neither here nor elsewhere in the Dutch is there any trace of the presence of Elckerlijck during the discussion.

The evidence for the priority of the Dutch seems indeed so overwhelming in quantity and, some of it, so decisive, even when taken alone, that the question may be regarded as no longer an open question. I refer, of course, not only to the few bits of evidence which I have here presented but to the much more numerous arguments presented by Professors Wood, Logeman, Kalff, and others.

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